

# God's work. Our hands.



**Emanuel Evangelical  
Lutheran Church**  
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Manchester, CT 06040

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Annual Report 2025





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**The Congregation Council**

Neal Benson  
Lynda Brown  
Jodi Eskin  
Kristen Fournier—Secretary  
Diane Gawlinski  
Benjamin Halmers  
Tom King—Vice President  
Jared Martin  
Katherine Rusch—President

**The Church Staff**

Ministers	The People of Emanuel
Pastor	The Rev. Joanna Hertzog Betkoski
Director of Family Ministries	Katie Kurlak
Director of Music	Jeff Sirois
Office Administrator	Anne Heinrich
Parish Nurse	Donna Connolly, RN
Property Supervisor	Kathy Hatch
Treasurer	Barton Sattler
Financial Secretary	Jodi Eskin
Worship Support Specialists	Berkley and Lisa Little

## *The Parish Registry*

Membership at end of 2024: 606

Members Gained in 2025:

Baptism (15 years or younger):	8
Adult Baptism	0
Affirmation of Faith:	7
Affirmation of Baptism:	0
Transfer from other denomination:	0
Transfer from other Lutheran:	0
Transfer from Evangelical Lutheran:	4
Reinstated as Members:	0

Total Members Gained in 2025: + 19

Members Removed in 2025

Death:	6
Inactivity:	286
Removal Requested:	5
Transfer:	2
Other Adjustment—Archived Out of State Members:	0

Total Members Removed in 2025: - 299

**Membership Total at End of 2025 = 326**

*Please note: The number of Members removed in 2025 is higher than normal because we “cleaned” Emanuel’s Membership Rolls in the fall of 2025. The last time we went through Emanuel’s Membership list in detail was 2018. Because of changes to Emanuel’s Constitution and Bylaws as voted on by the congregation in June 2025, a quorum for the Annual Meeting is now set at 10% of voting members instead of 50 voting members. This was one of the reasons that we went through the Membership list individually by each household. Moving forward, Emanuel’s Membership Rolls will be “cleaned” on a regular basis.*

**Attendance Record**

Total Sunday worship services:	50
Total weekday worship services:	8
Total Holy Communion services:	52
Average weekly worship attendance:	*164

**Pastoral Acts**

Baptisms:	8
Adult Baptisms:	0
Confirmations:	1
Weddings:	0
Funerals of members:	6
Funerals of non-members:	1

\* —Includes both our in-person worship attendance and our online worship attendance figures which the ELCA stated should be reported.

*(For your information, once a month our Pastor leads a worship service at Evergreen Crossings Retirement Living Community in South Windsor where several of Emanuel’s members live. Average attendance each month for worship is 24.)*

*Annual Report of the Pastor  
Joanna Hertzog Betkoski*

*Now there are varieties of gifts but the same Spirit, and there are varieties of services but the same Lord, and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.—1 Corinthians 12: 4-7*

On Epiphany Sunday in 2025, we picked the word “learn” for our congregation’s star word. I hung the star on the bulletin board in my office, and honestly, I didn’t give it a lot of thought until about two weeks before Christmas. However, as I reflected on the word, I realized that learning is a vital part of being church today. I don’t mean that we need to learn academically, but instead, being committed to the process of learning—that we commit to ongoing spiritual growth, humility, and attentiveness to how God is at work among and beyond the community. Learning involves being open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, willing to reflect on experience, listen to one another, and adapt practices that help us love God and neighbor to the best of our ability.

A learning church values teaching and discipleship, but also recognizes that learning happens through relationships, service, and honest conversation. Rather than assuming it has arrived at the promised land, such a church remains teachable—grounded in Scripture, shaped by prayer, and responsive to the needs of its community—seeking continually to grow in wisdom and mission. There are many ways that I saw Emanuel embody being a learning church in 2025, but I will focus on three.

When 2025 began, I had a goal of having our congregation join the Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance. As I set to find people in the congregation to be part of a core team, I kept running into road blocks rather than people being excited to be a part of it. For a while, I kept trying until I realized that the road blocks are showing me something—our congregation isn’t ready for this right now. And that is ok.

I saw our congregation embody being a learning church on rally day when our congregation listened to the request of a four-year-old to have a costume Sunday. Rally day worship was filled with superheroes, baseball players, cheerleaders, farmers, construction workers, butterflies, an Ed Gawlinski look-a-like, even a cloudy with a chance of meatball wide brimmed hat. It was a Sunday where the joy was palpable. All because a four-year-old thought it would be fun and all of you listened.

I saw our congregation embody being a learning church when we received a request from MACC for emergency food bags during the government shut down. We applied and received a Thrivent grant to purchase food and had a goal of packing 50 bags. However, with all of the food that you donated as well, we were able to pack 94 bags—far beyond our goal—because you listened and responded to a need in our community.

2025 was filled with births and baptisms in our congregation. Nearly every Sunday there are at least a few smiling babies in the pews. We gave thanks for the lives of the Saints who have passed before us with funerals and walked with one another through the uncertainty of grief and illness. Visitors continue to tell me how they feel authentically welcomed when they come to worship at Emanuel for the first time.

I continue to lead worship at Evergreen Crossings on the second Sunday of the month. Confirmation students traveled to Camp Calumet for a confirmation retreat. We welcomed Bea Luciano as our field education student. We gathered together for conversation during book study and Bible study. In 2025, I helped begin a new young adult ministry called Connecticut Gather that experimented with different activities—game nights, a visit to a brewery, a hike and brunch—and is beginning to form a core group and planning a retreat for 2026.

It's strange to think that I entered my 12<sup>th</sup> year of ordained ministry, and yet, I find it still important to remain open to what my experience teaches me and humble enough to not assume I have all of the answers. I still find it is important to meet with a clergy coach monthly (the same coach I have had since my first year of ministry) as well as a small group of colleagues where we encourage and challenge one another.

I am so grateful to walk in faith together, and I look forward to the ways the Holy Spirit will move, comfort and challenge us in 2026.

Peace to you and yours,  
Pastor Joanna Hertzog Betkoski



## *Annual Report of the Director of Music* *Jeff Sirois*

As I reflect on the past year, I am once again reminded that music at Emanuel Lutheran Church thrives because of its people. The many gifted musicians within the congregation, our committed choir members, Friends of Music at Emanuel, and a congregation who sings with energy and joy each week, all contribute to a vibrant and meaningful worship life. Thank you for giving me the continued privilege of leading our music ministry. In this report, I am pleased to share a summary of our music-making in 2025, and some thoughts as we look ahead. As always, I welcome your questions, feedback, and conversations—please feel free to reach out at any time.

### **Music in Sunday Worship**

Throughout 2025, our approach to blended worship continued to strengthen. Each week, I strive to select music that reflects the breadth of Christian musical tradition, including classical sacred repertoire, traditional hymnody, folk-inspired settings, jazz and gospel elements, and contemporary Christian music so that everyone in our community can encounter something familiar, something new, and something spiritually uplifting.

This year we were especially fortunate to feature a wide range of musicians from both within the congregation and the broader community. In addition to our regular instrumentalists and vocalists, we welcomed a flute quartet and several invited soloists whose artistry enriched worship in profound ways. The willingness of this congregation to embrace diverse musical expressions continues to inspire me, and I am deeply grateful for your openness, encouragement, and thoughtful feedback.

My goal remains to engage as much of the congregation as possible in every service. I rely on many of you - your voices, suggestions, and gifts—to help shape music at Emanuel into something beautiful and collaborative. Thank you for your partnership.

### **Holden Evening Prayer During Lent**

During Lent, Emanuel hosted Holden Evening Prayer each Thursday for the first time in this way, welcoming not only Emanuel members but also friends and neighbors from nearby congregations. Holden Evening Prayer represents a cherished tradition for many, and these gatherings offered a peaceful, contemplative space in the midst of the week. I am grateful to everyone who participated—musicians, readers, and those who simply gathered to pray and sing.

### **Anthem Choir and New Day Singers**

Our Anthem Choir and New Day Singers continue to thrive thanks to the extraordinary dedication of their members. Their commitment to musical preparation, Thursday evening rehearsals, and weekly offerings of anthems and service music is truly a gift to our congregation. Both choirs have shown tremendous flexibility and musicianship as we explore a wide variety of musical styles throughout the liturgical year.

As always, we warmly welcome new members. If you have ever considered singing with either choir, please know there is a place for you. Both groups rehearse on Thursday evenings, and we would be delighted to expand our musical community in the year ahead.

## **Handbells at Emanuel**

A significant addition this year was the revitalization of Emanuel's handbells, thanks in large part to the leadership of Kate Seyboth. Kate organized two Saturday Handbell Bootcamps, during which members gathered to learn the fundamentals of ringing, rehearse a piece of music, and then present that music in worship the following Sunday. These events were joyful, intergenerational, and deeply encouraging as we rebuild our handbell tradition. We hope to expand these opportunities in 2026 and continue integrating handbells into worship more frequently.

## **Summer Pick-Up Choir**

Our Summer Pick-Up Choir continued to be an effective way to include choral music during the months when the regular choirs are on recess. Each Sunday, we welcomed whoever wished to sing—seasonal attendees, longtime members, and visitors alike. These ensembles offered beautiful preludes, offertories, and postludes, and I remain grateful for the flexibility and enthusiasm of all who participated. I look forward to continuing this tradition next summer.

## **Guest Musician Experience at Camp Calumet**

One highlight of my year was the opportunity to serve as a guest musician at Camp Calumet in New Hampshire. Alongside members of the camp's music team—and several musicians from Emanuel—I helped lead music for camp worship and community gatherings. It was a joyful, refreshing experience in a beautiful setting, and a meaningful reminder of the many ways music strengthens Christian community.

## **Special Services: Easter and Christmas**

Thanks to the generous support of Emanuel's endowment fund, we were once again able to invite chamber orchestras to enhance our major festival services.

- Easter Sunday included selections from *Handel's Messiah* alongside beloved hymns and contemporary songs. The combination of brass, strings, woodwinds, and timpani brought extraordinary energy and depth to our celebration of the Resurrection.
- Christmas Eve services were equally uplifting, featuring a chamber orchestra of brass, strings, woodwinds, and percussion. Their contributions added color and resonance that elevated our carols, liturgy, and special selections throughout the day.

The presence of these ensembles continues to enrich our worship in significant ways, and I am grateful for the resources that make this possible.

## **Organ Repairs and Future Needs**

This year, the organ underwent a repair addressing several ongoing cyphers caused by failing valves. These valves have now been replaced, restoring stability to the instrument. Our technician has recommended that the organ's chest be repaired within the next one to two years to ensure long-term reliability and optimal performance.

The endowment committee has generously set aside funds toward this necessary work, and I will continue to keep church leadership and the congregation informed as we plan for the next phase of repairs.

## **Closing Thoughts**

Music is a central expression of Emanuel's identity. It is a joy to witness—and be part of—a congregation so willing to sing, serve, and uplift worship through its gifts. Thank you for your continued partnership, for your encouragement, and for your willingness to embrace both the familiar and the new.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve you.

## *Annual Report of the Parish Nurse Donna Connolly, RN*

In 2025, *Journeying through Grief* booklets were sent to ten members or friends and family of members. This ministry has proven to be greatly appreciated by the recipients. The booklets are mailed at intervals during the year after a loss and they deal with issues and emotions people may experience at those times. Many have found them quite helpful. I encourage members to let me know if you have a friend or family member that might benefit and I will gladly send the booklets along.

You may know that there is a lending library of medical equipment, including crutches, canes, walkers, rollators, commode, and a shower chair among other items. Items have been donated and may be borrowed. Some non durable items have been donated as well. There is a list of what is available outside the Parish Nurse Office and folks may contact me for help or questions.

Working with the Town of Manchester Department of Social Services, the Parish Nurse Fund was able to provide much needed assistance to five residents or families going through challenging times. The community needs are great and many are struggling. As a member of the Manchester Community Services Council (MCSC), which meets monthly at Midwest Foodbank, I have learned a lot about the Manchester community and many of the resources available to those in need.

Visitation ministry is an area that I look forward to growing in 2026. I have visited folks at home, and in the hospital and Emanuel has a core group of dedicated individuals who visit homebound members which is greatly appreciated.

In April, I presented a program to Ruth Circle about the Parish Nurse Program, introducing myself and talking about the history of Parish nursing in general and at Emanuel. I look forward to providing more educational opportunities in the coming months.

Respectfully submitted,  
Donna Connolly, RN



*Annual Report of the Director of Family Ministries*  
*Katie Kurlak*

Throughout the year we coordinated several events to build relationships among church members. In the winter and spring we played board games together, went tubing at Powder Ridge, bounced on trampolines at Urban Air, and went mini golfing with lots of ice cream. In the fall we zoomed through corn mazes and went apple picking. We also held another “cookies and care packages” event to spread joy to our homebound members and those needing some extra cheer this holiday season.

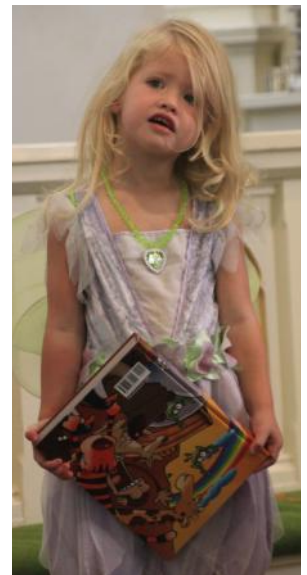
In the spring, the Sunday School service project was to raise money for Mosaic. Becca Piel taught a Sunday school class to educate us about physical and mental disabilities. Throughout the month of April, \$531. was collected and donated to Mosaic.

Sunday School kicked off with Rally Day on September 7. We celebrated by wearing costumes, and enjoyed pizza and Kona Ice. Sunday school is held during the church service in the Sunday School Room. Once a month there is a children’s sermon in lieu of a lesson. Emily Braman, Brett Hertzog Betkoski, and Danielle Berneski are the team of teachers. We also have a second adult member of the congregation attend as required under “safe church.” This year we started using a new curriculum called “Two or More,” which is geared towards smaller churches with kids of all ages in one class.

On December 14 we celebrated Saint Lucia. We had ten children participate. The hymns associated with this celebration were sung by the entire congregation.

Both of the Christmas Eve services had a children’s sermon and every child received a nativity ornament.

Respectfully submitted,  
Katie Kurlak & Danielle Berneski



## Annual Report of the Congregation Council Kathy Rusch – Council President

*“So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up. So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all.”—Galatians 6: 9-10*

The people of Emanuel entered the new year full of hope and promise! Both tangible and intangible blessings seemed to be upon us as we grew together in our faith. The congregation’s Star word was “Learn” and our focus for 2025 centered around “Belonging.” Here is how our year unfolded.

We began by welcoming Lynda Brown and Jared Martin as newly elected members of Council. Their willingness to serve as leaders in this faith community shows that sense of “belonging.” We started the process of updating and revising our Constitution and Bylaws. Revisions included changing the date of our Annual Meeting to the first Sunday in February, or within 60 days of the start of the new year; updates included setting the Annual Meeting quorum at 10% of voting membership rather than a set number of 50 members. Ray and Kathy Purtell were appointed to be Emanuel’s representatives at the 2025 New England Synod Assembly. During the Lenten season, Linda Jackson led a wonderful intergenerational weaving art project while Emanuel and Concordia worshiped together twice during this holy time. In April we hosted a lovely Newcomers’ gathering where we all shared stories of our faith journeys. During the year we welcomed 19 new members into our Emanuel family! Joe Ferron presented Council with an update of Emanuel’s investment portfolio. Council appointed Nils Loftus and Ray Purtell as new members of the Emanuel Housing Corporation’s Board of Directors. The renovation of our new Family Room was completed, thanks to a donation from Gail and Doug Porter’s children (in memory of their parents) and residual funds from Chestnut Hill Preschool. We are now able to livestream worship services in the room and it is proving to be a comfortable gathering space for adults and children alike! (Book study was brought back this year and is held in the Family Room!) In May, Council approved monies to replace the shingles above the hallway section between the sanctuary and the chapel. We also approved the “Church Immigration Raid Response Policy” re: Public and Private Spaces in Church. This is the protocol to be followed in the event ICE agents were ever to come to Emanuel.

On a beautiful Sunday afternoon in late spring, a group of Emanuel family and friends (along with a few Concordia friends) “hung out” together in the left field bleachers of Dunkin’ Park as we took in a Yard Goats game and got to learn more about each other! The Yard Goats lost the game but fellowship and fun won the day!

Over the summer, Pastor Joanna tasked the Council to each connect with five different members of our congregation and ask the question, “What makes Emanuel unique?” Their responses were heart-warming, humorous and genuine. Pastor shared those responses in the September *Visitor* newsletter. Council approved the 2025 Endowment Fund distribution recommendations and also approved updated descriptions of the Seasonal Sharing and Pr. Bill White Calumet Funds. We approved Pastor Joanna’s Portico Insurance Plan for 2026. The membership rolls were cleaned this fall after a 7-year hiatus. It will be necessary to do this more often since the quorum for our Annual Congregation Meetings now requires a percentage of voting membership rather than a set number.

Rally Day this year was unforgettable! Initiated by the request of 4 yr-old Eli Kurlak, the entire congregation enthusiastically joined him and his young friends in costume to celebrate the day! Three-year olds and third graders received their Bibles. Following worship we enjoyed Kona Ice truck treats and pizza for brunch and a competitive ping pong tournament was held for folks of all ages! What a hit! Later in the month, several Emanuel parishioners went to Kaiser Hall at Concordia to celebrate Oktoberfest with our Lutheran siblings. Sadly, Concordia has made the very difficult decision to begin the process of Holy Closure; they would like to have as many get-togethers as possible before they close their doors at the end of June 2026. We will keep them in our prayers and help them in any way we can during this challenging time.

In October, Council approved Bea Luciano-Santiago (licensed lay minister of Ministerio Nueva Creacion) as a field education student with us as she enters United Lutheran Seminary. Bea will be with us for much of the fall, winter and spring. We also approved a new sound board and thanks to Berk Little and Jeff Sirois, it was purchased, installed, and up and running before Advent! Stewardship had yet another successful campaign this year! The congregation was challenged to turn in 115 Statements of Intent. If successful, we would receive a \$3,000 challenge gift (\$1,000 each from three anonymous members) We received 117 Statements of Intent! The generosity of our faith community is truly uplifting! Our focus in the year ahead is “Becoming.” Who are we “becoming” in our faith community, our local community, and in the world? How are we reflecting God’s love within and beyond our four walls? We look forward to continuing this journey together!

In November, Council approved a 4% wage increase for staff with a \$400 step increase for Pastor Joanna (for years of service) plus a \$600 bonus for her stellar leadership as we grow in number as well as spiritually. Adela Garmendia was reappointed to another term on the Personnel Committee. Council took a national survey regarding the health of congregations (Survey for Faith Communities Today). Council also hosted what we hope to be an annual Appreciation Coffee Hour to thank all those who volunteer their time, talents and treasures either out front or behind the scenes at Emanuel. We had “make your own” ice cream sundaes along with a variety of pies and other assorted goodies. For the Advent season, Linda Jackson once again led another art project that was “for the birds!” (and such beautiful birds they were!)

With the closing of Concordia, Ministerio Nueva Creacion (MNC) needed a new home. Council approved Emanuel to become a “fiscal agent” for MNC, similar to what we do with Friends of Music at Emanuel. MNC is known as a “synodically authorized worshiping community.” The New England Synod supports MNC financially by giving Emanuel (the fiscal agent) monies to pay for Bea Santiago’s salary.

In December, Council accepted the Nominating Committee’s Report and Recommendations for elected positions on Council, Finance, Endowment and Nominating Committees. We set Pastor Joanna’s Housing Allowance for 2026 and also set the date for the Annual Meeting for January 25, 2026 (Third Sunday after Epiphany.) We appointed Rod Andersen, Ann Cook and Joe Prudente to the Audit Committee to review ELC’s 2025 financial records. Marc Polito was appointed to a 3-yr term on Personnel. We ended the year reviewing and accepting the 2026 proposed budget for Congregation approval at the Annual meeting. The budget proposal shows a surplus balance sheet for the second year in a row!

We are also planning ahead for Pastor Joanna's sabbatical in the summer of 2027. Though eligible for a sabbatical in 2026, she would like to take it from June 7 – August 30, 2027. We will be applying for a prestigious Lilly Foundation Clergy Renewal Program Grant that, if received, will benefit both Pastor Joanna and the entire congregation! Regardless, we would like to start planning ahead for this exciting adventure in our faith journey!

Our last worship service for 2025 was "Lessons & Carols" Sunday. It was another joyous occasion as that same four-year old (Eli) suggested we bring our own bells to the worship service. Those bells rang out enthusiastically during our first and last hymns and the postlude! What a wonderful way to end 2025!

We have had some truly remarkable learning experiences this year! We've learned that we can do more together than on our own; that we are not afraid of embracing the ideas of a child; that each one of us has a place here and a gift to share. Through the grace of God, we have been blessed with a tremendous capacity for love, both within and beyond our faith community! We've welcomed the stranger, broken bread together, shared our stories. We will continue to learn how best to serve God and one another in this fragile, fragmented world in which we live today.

*"We love because he first loved us." —1 John 4:19*

### ***Personnel Committee***

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In November, the Committee recommended a 3.5-4% general wage increase in 2026 for the Pastor, Office Administrator, Music Director and Property Manager. The recommendation reflects market conditions and the recommendations of the New England Synod. An additional \$400 step increase, consistent with Synod recommendations, was also recommended for the Pastor.

The Committee is comprised of six members appointed by Council. Members include Kim Boerner-Mercier, Donna Connolly, Adela Garmendia, Steve Lazarus, Gail McGrath, and Ray Purtell. I am grateful for the volunteer commitment of both time and talent given by each of the committee members as well as the participation of Pastor Joanna and Diane Gawlinski, Council Liaison. The group works diligently to fulfill its responsibilities as specified in the congregation's Bylaws.

Respectfully submitted,  
Ray Purtell, Chairperson

## Hospitality Committee

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The Hospitality Committee plans and hosts a variety of functions held by, and for, the Congregation throughout the year. This includes special meetings, celebrations, fundraisers, and funerals as well as other events. Our committee is happy to help make these functions flow smoothly for the enjoyment of the congregation and our guests.

The committee is made up of volunteers that have an interest in or knack for hosting events. Our core members are: Melissa Benson, Kim Boerner-Mercier, Emily Braman, Donna Connolly, Marlene D'Addario, Melissa Golden, Kathy Hatch, Lisa Little, Pat Nelson, Judy Polito, Kathy Rusch and Marianne Wilcox. We are always open to having new people join our committee – just contact one of us if you are interested.

Committee members are responsible for planning, procuring necessary supplies for each event, and setting up, serving and cleaning up each time they host. We are under the direction of the Pastor who deems what events are in need of food services and when the events will take place. Thrivent Action Team cards are used whenever possible to offset the expenses incurred.

### Events this year included:

- Annual Meeting
- Soup and Songs
- Thrivent Sunday
- Newcomer's Reception
- Church Picnic and Rally Day
- Volunteer Social
- Stewardship Sunday Celebration
- Church Christmas Decorating
- Three Funerals



### Coffee Hours:

With the exception of a few Sundays, three members have been hosting Coffee Hours after Church most weeks. There are also a couple that help with cleanup when they are available. We would greatly appreciate more people to help with this endeavor, even if you can't do it every week. We also appreciate the many people that donate goodies to be served! We have grown in attendance from putting out four tables to seven or eight and everyone seems to enjoy the fellowship (young and old).



## Designated Giving Committee

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The objective of the Designated Giving Committee is to disburse money from the Emanuel Memorial Fund. Requests for funding come from church members and other sources. The committee members attempt to divide disbursements into three equal parts in the following categories:

### Church:

Disbursements are used to improve conditions or assist members and staff at Emanuel.

### Local:

Disbursements are directed toward causes which impact conditions in our town, state or country.

### Worldwide:

Disbursements may be used to fund needs of global organizations.

At our June 9, 2025 meeting, the committee met to disburse funds totaling \$3,006.00. Designated Giving received one request for consideration. The request came from Campfield Heinrich for \$800 to help with tuition cost for his Clinical Pastoral Education at Havenwood Heritage Heights in New Hampshire.

The committee decided on the following disbursements that were approved by Council:

Request from Campfield	\$800.
MACC Charities	\$900
Global Refuge	\$900.
Samaritan Fund	<u>\$100.</u>
<b>Disbursements totaling</b>	<b>\$2,700.</b>

Members of the Designated Giving Committee are:

Elsa Robinson (Chair), Linda Eckblom and Richard Marsh

## Prayer Shawl Ministry

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This wonderful ministry brings joy to those who knit or crochet prayer shawls and to those who are the recipients of their products. We strive to have shawls available for anyone in need of God's comfort. The prayer shawls are on display and blessed on the first Sunday of every month. There is always a need for more prayer shawls so if you could possibly contribute, it would be appreciated. Since the Prayer Shawl Ministry began at Emanuel in 2003, we have distributed **well over 1,000** prayer shawls not only to our members but to the wider community. We gratefully appreciate all who continue to make prayer shawls.

For any questions or for more information about this ministry, contact one of the coordinators: Doris Johnson (860-871-1498) or Norma Wirta (860-875-5163).

## Property Committee

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Members: Ray Wilcox, Kathy Hatch, Nelson Robinson, Lisa Little, Melissa Golden, Jared Martin, Liaison for Church council.

In 2025 the Church Property Committee has worked on/completed the following:

- Replaced Roof and Gutters on the Office wing and Community Room.
- Installed Ring doorbell for Pastor due to office hours if Anne is not in. And if she is alone in the church she can see who is at the door.
- Replaced railings going up the stairs from Luther Hall parking lot to the side walk leading to the front of the church.
- Put 2 new thermostats in Luther Hall.
- Installed a projector in Luther Hall and put an HDMI jack in the wall for ease of use, purchased a HDMI cable and adaptors to with it. They are kept in the closet where the audio system is. (The projector was donated)
- Purchased a TV for the Porter Family Room so that it can be used for overflow or a quiet room on Sunday mornings. Zoom is available in that room.
- We removed the bushes alongside of the church leading to the main office door.
- Repaired the sconces on the right-hand side of the Sanctuary; three of them were out.
- Replaced a fan belt on one of the A/C air handlers.
- Rearranged the Main Office and relocated and installed a new thermostat so that the heat in the office would work better.
- Replaced the security systems console due to 2 channels that had stopped working.
- Replaced tile in entry of bathroom in the office wing due to old ones that came loose and were a tripping hazard.
- Replaced one smoke detector that was malfunctioning, and also bought a spare due to them being older and not easily available.
- Purchased mulch to put around the church beds.
- Put up our Christmas tree in the Sanctuary, wreaths on the exterior doors of the church, and put candles in the windows of the Sanctuary with help from the congregation. (Thank You!)
- Passed our annual fire and smoke alarm inspections and purchased a fire extinguisher for the church.
- Replaced gutter guards on the Lynne Gustafson Parish House also put new handrails on the stairs outside for safety.
- Replaced rear stairs on the Lynne Gustafson Parish House due to them starting to rot away and being unsafe.

We achieved a lot this year. Due to all of this, the church is a healthy and safer place.

Respectfully submitted, Berkley Little, Property Committee Chairperson

## Cards for Caring

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The mission of the Cards for Caring Team at Emanuel is to send cards each month to our homebound members in order to let them know that the people of Emanuel are thinking of them and sending our love and prayers. The 14 recipients of these cards often let us know how much they appreciate receiving our cards and that it helps them feel connected to their church family since they are unable to attend church on a regular basis. Thank you to the dedicated Cards for Caring Team members for participating in this important ministry. The Cards for Caring Team consists of Kim Boerner-Mercier, Ann-Linda Bray, Alice Carlson, Jodi Eskin, Katie Kurlak, and Nancy Whiton.

Cards for Caring Team Leader: Nancy Whiton ([nwhiton@snet.net](mailto:nwhiton@snet.net))

## Altar Guild

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Emanuel Lutheran Church has continued to be “GOD WITH US”, a community of faithful members in the church that love is building.

The Emanuel Altar Guild is a group of dedicated members who provide the Lord’s Super ministry, prepare the chancel and its furnishings for corporate worship including special events and services. The special events this past year were highlighted by baptisms, confirmation, welcoming new members, first communions, and, sadly, funeral services.

Altar Guild members work to keep the Altar and Chancel set with appropriate church seasonal paraments, candles, banners, and flowers. Preparing the Altar and Chancel with plants and flowers for Easter, Pentecost, and Christmas is a highlight. We appreciate the church members who purchase flowers in honor or in memory of loved ones throughout the year making the Altar beautiful.

AG Members are Melissa Benson, Kim Boerner-Mercier, Emily Braman, Lynda Brown, Linda Eckblom, JaneMarie Galiette, Lisa Little, Ligi-Elin Milord, Pat Nelson, Judy Polito, Elsa Robinson, Marianne Wilcox and the “indispensable” assistants: Neal, Caroline and Emily Benson, Berk Little, Nelson Robinson, Ray Wilcox, Martin Johnson, and Kathy Hatch.

New Altar Guild members are always welcome to join us. Please contact any of our members and training is always provided.

Respectfully submitted,  
Kim Boerner-Mercier



## *Stewardship Committee*

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The Stewardship Committee consists of Pastor Joanna Hertzog Betkoski, Ben Hogue, Kathy Rusch and Ray Purtell.

Using a process learned from “Stewardship for All Seasons” the committee developed the fall stewardship campaign which included a full color brochure and three bulletin inserts, weekly temple talks, and personal letters to members. The committee continued the “Building...Belonging...Becoming” theme with an emphasis on “Becoming” and a focus on sustaining excellence in worship and music, creating space for becoming, and supporting our ministry partners; the Manchester Area Conference of Churches and the ministries of the New England Synod. We are grateful for the inspirational temple talks shared by Pastor Mark Lingle, Associate to the Bishop, Shannon Baldassario, CEO, Manchester Area Conference of Churches (MACC) and, Kathy Rusch, Council President. We were blessed to have three members who each offered a challenge gift of \$1,000 if the congregation could secure 115 statements of intent. Mission accomplished! The celebratory coffee held on Sunday, November 9 was expanded to include packing 94 emergency food kits for MACC. We are grateful for the response of the congregation.

As of December 2, 2025, 117 statements of intent were received totaling \$344,827 for 2026. (This compares to 109 totaling \$311,781 in 2025.) While the numbers are important, we celebrate the culture of generosity that is growing at Emanuel. It’s not just How much was given? but How are we nurturing a spirit of gratitude, trust and shared mission? We strive to see generosity deepen and to tell the stories of how we give to one another and serve others. We look for the new connections and ministries that emerge because of our giving. We also lift up how our language and practices are forming us as a generous, hopeful community.

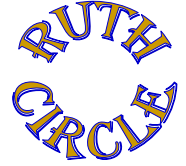
As a congregation, we continue to work at becoming—becoming the body of Christ, a reflection of God’s love in the world. It’s a continual commitment to pay attention to where God is calling us. We believe that God is shaping something beautiful at Emanuel. We’re learning to be vulnerable, to be courageous, to practice humility, and to take risks of love. We are creating space to be vulnerable, ask questions, grow together and to care deeply.

Thank you for your generosity, your presence, and willingness to grow in faith and love. We are grateful to be on this journey together.

Respectfully submitted,  
The Emanuel Stewardship Committee



Ruth Circle members meet the first Tuesday of each month for seven months of the year. Meetings are held in Luther Hall beginning at 7:00 PM. We enjoy friendships, sharing our faith, and service when needed. We continue with hostesses conducting the meetings, devotions, taking meeting minutes, and serving delicious desserts each month. The meeting minutes are then sent to Carol Kohl, who distributes the minutes to each member via email before the next meeting. The yearly dues are \$15.00. (Augmented by additional free-will contributions for special needs or projects.) Ruth Circle members are there to help with desserts at funeral receptions held in Luther Hall.



### **HIGHLIGHTS OF OUR 2025 PROGRAMS**

**March** – Steve Penney did an interesting slide presentation of “Native American Sites East of the River” centered on the Podunk Indians and other tribes close to Manchester.

**April** - Donna Connolly, Parish Nurse at Emanuel, presented a very informative, comprehensive program centering around the history of the “Parish Nurse Program” and told of some of her wide-ranging nursing experiences over the years that have brought her to the place she is now.

**May** – Potluck dinner in Luther Hall with delicious foods. After we ate, we planned programs and hostesses for the upcoming year.

**September** – We enjoyed another Potluck dinner and got caught up on summer activities and travels. Discussed the rules in the new Ruth Circle Directory.

**October** – Joyce Halmers did a slide presentation on her trip to Portugal with her son and family on a river boat cruise down the Duoro River and the stops at many ports along the way. She had objects made of cork (abundant in Portugal) and tiles on display.

**November** – All present, enthusiastically, participated in making lovely felt birds from kits prepared by Linda Jackson and explicit instructions with help from Lynda Brown. The birds will be placed on wreaths to be hung in the Sanctuary during the Christmas Season. An evening of fun and laughter!

**December** – Ruth Circle members attended the Christmas Party at Georgina’s Restaurant in Bolton with guest speaker, Shannon Baldassario, Chief Executive Officer of MACC Charities, and Pastor Joanna Hertzog Betkoski as our guest. Our service project each year is donating layette items for MACC and a monetary donation, out of our treasury, to purchase diapers/throw away underwear. Shannon shared stories how MACC helps many families in need and also works with other agencies to accomplish their goals.

Guests are always welcome at our meetings. Membership is open to all women in the congregation and hope you will consider joining us!

Submitted by: Carol Kohl

## Seasonal Sharing

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Emanuel continued its partnerships for Seasonal Sharing in 2025 with the Manchester Board of Education through Head Start for Thanksgiving and with MACC for both Thanksgiving and Christmas. This year MACC requested that we only give gift cards for their families in need. The generosity of Emanuel members, who volunteered their time and provided donations, made it possible for us to continue our commitments to members of our community. Thank you again to Anne Heinrich for providing unending support throughout both campaigns. We are very fortunate to have you!

### Thanksgiving:

In November we delivered \$75 gift cards to Manchester Head Start for twenty families.

We also delivered 30 Thanksgiving gift cards for MACC families. The gift cards purchased from ShopRite were \$25. per family member.

Total Cost of ShopRite gift cards: \$2,250.00

### Christmas:

At Christmas Emanuel supported MACC families with 30, \$35. Walmart gift cards, one for each family member. This year MACC distributed the cards. We also gave 30, \$25. (per person in each family) ShopRite gift cards for food. Thanks to all the members of Emanuel who helped to fulfill this commitment by filling the “Little White Church”.

Total Cost of ShopRite Gift Cards: \$750.00

Total Cost of \$35 Gift Cards: \$1,050.00

**GRAND TOTAL** **\$4,050.00!!**

We would like to thank everybody for their generous contributions that made these gift cards possible. We not only exceeded last year’s contributions, but we also gave more than the minimum that MACC requested.

Submitted by:

Lisa and Berk Little, Seasonal Sharing Coordinators



## ***Finance Committee***

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**Members:** Joe Prudente (Chair), Stéphane Milord (Secretary), Ann Cook, Marshall Monda, Sue Tracey. **Ex-Officio Voting Members:** Barton Sattler (Treasurer), Ben Hogue (Council Liaison), Jodi Eskin (Financial Secretary).

**Description:** This committee assists the Congregation Council (“the Council”) with the congregation’s financial matters. It consists of a minimum of six voting congregation members. Each member serves three-year terms with their tenures arranged so that one-third of the terms expire annually. Members are eligible for two full consecutive three-year terms.

### **Responsibilities:**

Oversight of all the congregation’s financial affairs including the budget, off-budget accounts, the insurance program and information technology to ensure they are conducted efficiently and report such to the Council monthly.

Recommend to the Council: (a) distribution of the congregation’s special funds (e.g., legacy gifts), (b) insurance coverage, (c) information technology upgrades and (d) investment allocation of the congregation’s funds.

Prepare a draft budget for the succeeding year and submit such draft budget to the Council for its action and subsequent presentation at the congregation meeting.

### **2025 Congregation Finance Perspectives:**

**Summary**—2025 closed much better than budgeted with a \$41,650 surplus compared to a \$256 budgeted surplus. Higher than anticipated contributions and lower than anticipated building maintenance expenses and choir section leader compensation were the primary drivers.

**Income**—\$444,406 as compared to a \$412,429 budget, or \$31,977 favorable. All contribution categories (e.g., pledged, unpledged, loose) exceeded budget.

**Expenses**—\$402,756 as compared to a \$412,174 budget, or \$9,417 favorable.

**Initiatives**—During 2025, the committee continued its work on internal controls to ensure efficient and effective use of the congregation’s financial resources. In this regard, we’ve made substantial progress on a policy document and some detailed procedures. For 2026, our objective is to complete and enact the policy document and begin completing detailed procedures. Additionally, we intend to evaluate computer network upgrade options and recommend the path forward.

The Finance Committee would like to acknowledge and thank our Treasurer, Barton Sattler; Office Administrator, Anne Heinrich; and Jodi Eskin and Gail McGrath for their service to the Finance Committee and assistance with managing the finances of the congregation behind the scenes.

**2025 Actual and 2026 Proposed Budget**

	<b>Congregation Approved 2025</b>	<b>Treasurer's Report 31-Dec 2025</b>	<b>Proposed Budget 2026</b>
<b>Income</b>			
Pledges/Envelopes	\$303,889	\$312,918	\$337,930
Unpledged/Anticipated Giving	\$45,000	\$59,040	\$42,000
Special/Loose	\$7,000	\$13,249	\$7,000
Challenge gift	\$0	\$0	\$3,000
Use of Church/Misc	\$26,540	\$29,199	\$26,080
Housing Board	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$24,000
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$412,429</b>	<b>\$444,406</b>	<b>\$440,010</b>
<b>Expenses</b>			
Benevolences			
New England Synod	\$42,707	\$46,225	\$46,792
MACC	\$10,677	\$11,500	\$11,698
GHIAA	\$750	\$750	\$1,000
RIC	\$750	\$750	\$1,000
Subtotal	\$54,883	\$59,225	\$60,490
Compensation			
Professional Education	\$1,500	\$570	\$1,500
Professional Expenses	\$750	\$726	\$750
Salaries	\$183,447	\$183,192	\$191,538
FICA/Medicare	\$15,506	\$15,201	\$22,262
Pension + Health Ins	\$46,269	\$46,293	\$48,404
Choir Section Leaders	\$10,920	\$8,790	\$10,353
Supply Pastor	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$800
Substitute Music Director	\$800	\$600	\$800
Mileage Reimbursement	\$500	\$244	\$500
Worker's Compensation	\$3,500	\$2,871	\$3,000
Subtotal	\$264,192	\$259,487	\$279,907
Commissions			
Stewardship	\$900	\$274	\$600
Synod Assembly	\$3,000	\$1,278	\$2,000
Council/Misc	\$1,000	\$0	\$1,000
Education	\$1,700	\$852	\$1,000
Fellowship/Hospitality	\$200	\$75	\$200
Worship & Arts - Altar Guild	\$1,500	\$1,214	\$1,500
Worship & Arts - Music	\$1,500	\$4,632	\$2,000
Subtotal	\$9,800	\$8,324	\$8,300
Buildings			
Maintenance	\$25,000	\$20,262	\$25,000
Utilities	\$22,970	\$22,942	\$23,535
Insurance	\$24,674	\$22,946	\$25,908
Subtotal	\$72,644	\$66,150	\$74,443
Office			
Postage & Operations	\$15,550	\$14,785	\$15,100
Technology	\$500	\$181	\$2,000
Subtotal	\$16,050	\$14,966	\$17,100
Unanticipated Expenses	\$0	\$0	\$0
Credit Card Rewards	(\$596)	(\$596)	(\$1,008)
Thrivent Choice	(\$4,800)	(\$4,800)	\$0
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$412,174</b>	<b>\$402,756</b>	<b>\$439,232</b>
<b>Emanuel Reserve</b>	<b>\$256</b>	<b>\$41,650</b>	<b>\$779</b>

Member Contributions	\$355,889	\$385,208	\$389,930
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# Statement of Funds and Groups 2025

	Balance 1-Jan-25	Deposits (Gains)	Transfers	Disbursements (Losses)	Balance 31-Dec-25
<b>MEMORIAL FUNDS</b>					
Emanuel Memorial Fund	1,861	3,102	(100)	2,600	2,263
Structural Preservation Fund	67,924	1,733	0	40,294	29,364
<b>SPECIAL FUNDS</b>					
Emanuel Reserve	425,405	66,503	0	0	491,909
<b>Endowments</b>					
Christian Education	101,157	12,113	0	2,400	110,870
Extended Ministries	66,960	10,733	(500)	1,250	75,943
Music Fund	109,958	15,988	(2,700)	0	123,246
Structural Preservation	85,070	14,689	(2,100)	0	97,659
Altar Guild Flower Fund	546	1,289	0	1,317	518
Altar Guild Communion Supplies	166	237	0	358	45
Bill White Calumet Campership Fund	5,913	3,807	500	4,622	5,598
CHP Renovations	3,000	0	0	2,841	159
Hospitality Fund	255	88	0	0	342
Lay Education	1,838	0	0	0	1,838
Memorial Bricks	0	950	0	175	775
Parish Nurse	7,708	1,678	0	2,650	6,736
Samaritan Fund	4,254	3,817	100	4,667	3,504
Seasonal Sharing Fund	3,046	4,327	0	4,150	3,223
Seminary Assistance Fund	261	1,000	0	261	1,000
Social Justice Fund	2,500	0	0	0	2,500
Special Music Fund	5,360	1,025	4,800	4,892	6,293
St Lucia Pageant Fund	1,438	0	0	0	1,438
Thrivent Choice	11,860	4,558	0	4,800	11,618
<b>GROUPS</b>					
Friends of Music	9,691	14,994	0	12,723	11,962
Prayer Shawl Ministry	50	0	0	11	39
National Youth Gathering	2,927	910	0	0	3,837
Ruth Circle	208	345	0	245	308
	919,356	163,887	0	90,255	992,988

## *Benevolence Report 2025*

### **Budgeted Donations**

New England Synod (12%)	\$46,225
MACC (2%)	\$11,500
Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance	\$750
Reconciling In Christ	\$750

**Total Budgeted Donations** \$59,225

### **Contributions, Events, Special Funds**

Community Caring (Parish Nurse)	\$2,650
ELCA Disaster Relief	\$450
ELCA Global Refuge (from Designated Giving)	\$900
Seasonal Sharing	\$4,150
MACC	
Donations	\$5,286
MACC Souper Bowl	\$583
Designated Giving Distribution	\$900
Samaritan Fund Disbursements	\$4,667
World Hunger	\$5,042
Lutheran World Relief	\$3,250
Ascentia (formerly Lutheran Social Services)	\$3,000
Extended Ministries Endowment (to Interval House)	\$1,000
Donations for Kurlak Family	\$1,500

**Total Contributions, Events, Special Funds** \$33,378

### **Scholarships/Camperships**

Camp Calument Camperships	\$4,622
Designated Giving Distribution	\$800
Christian Education Endowment	\$2,400
Emanuel Seminary Assistance Fund	\$261

**Total Scholarships/Camperships** \$8,083

### **Non-Monetary Benevolence**

MACC (Food & personal items, MACC pantry)	\$1,950
Other	\$0

**Total Non-Monetary Benevolence** \$1,950

**Total Benevolence** \$102,636 \$102,636

## Nominating Committee

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The Nominating Committee presents the following nominees to fill vacancies on the Church Council and the Finance, Endowment and Nominating Committees.

### Church Council (Three year term)

Diane Gawlinski Expires January 2029  
Paxton Heinrich Expires January 2029\*  
Beverly Niemann Expires January 2028\* (*filling vacancy*)

### Finance Committee (Three year term)

Kim Boerner-Mercier Expires January 2029\*  
Kathy Rusch Expires January 2029\*

### Endowment Committee (Three year term)

Jenifer Minicucci Expires January 2029\*  
Marianne Wilcox Expires January 2029

### Nominating Committee

Ed Gawlinski Expires January 2029  
Kathy Rusch Expires January 2029

\*eligible for an additional 3 year term.

Respectfully submitted:

Ray Purtell, Chairperson, Emily Braman, Vyrjil Buus, Caitlin Byrne, Linda Jackson, and Helen Johnson.

## Nominee Bios

### COUNCIL

**Diane Gawlinski** has been a member of Emanuel since the age of ten, when her parents transferred to Emanuel from Zion Lutheran Church. Diane was confirmed and married at Emanuel and she, and her husband Ed, raised their three children here. Diane is a regular church goer and sings with both the New Day Singers and the Anthem Choir. She is serving on Council and would enjoy continuing for a second term. Having retired recently from the Manchester Public Schools as a Reading Tutor, Diane looks forward to more opportunities to volunteer at Emanuel. Diane and Ed have been enjoying traveling abroad and visiting their grandchildren in MA and NH.

**Paxton Heinrich** has been a member of Emanuel for 20+ years. He enjoys spending time with his family and values getting to know the people around him in all areas of life. He can be found serving as a worship support specialist and helping in any areas that he can.

**Beverly Niemann** (*Two year term, filling vacancy*) has been a member since 1991 and has seen many changes both in church and herself. Her daughter, Kaylee, was baptized and confirmed at Emanuel. She currently serves as an Assisting Minister and enjoys being a lector and coffee hour host. She has also been a member of Anthem Choir. Her nomination and subsequent appointment to Council, if approved, will be her next step in her faith journey.

## FINANCE

**Kim Boerner-Mercier** and her husband, John, joined Emanuel more than 20 years ago. Their sons, Jaron and Tobias, were both confirmed at Emanuel. Kim has worked for Manchester Public Schools in a variety of positions since 2002. She is currently a member of Altar Guild, Personnel Committee, and Ruth Circle. She has just completed two terms on the Endowment Committee. It is her joy to be an active part of Sunday worship.

**George Brown** is a relatively new member of Emanuel, He is ready to become more involved in the church's activities. Historically he has been involved in different aspects of his prior churches on the building and Pastor Parish committees. Lynda and George have been married for nearly 59 years and have two married sons and granddaughters. He is involved in the Army & Navy Club and American Legion following 40 years of being in the Army National Guard and retired as a Command Sergeant Major. In addition he is a member of the Manchester Garden Club and the Manchester Historical Society. His occupation was an owner/operator of a burglar and fire company, which he retired from 20 years ago.

**Kathy Rusch** has been a member of Emanuel since 2018. She most recently has served on Council and on the Stewardship Committee. She also volunteers for various duties within our faith community. She taught physical education (and coached) for 30 years at South Windsor High School, then worked 15 years for Integrated Rehabilitation Services PT clinics. Kathy lives in Ellington and enjoys sports, photography, history and spending time with friends!

## ENDOWMENT

**Jenifer Minicucci** is a 3rd generation member of Emanuel. Her grandparents, Bill and Emma Stephens, joined the church first and her father and his three siblings were all confirmed at Emanuel. Jenifer was confirmed at Emanuel as were her three siblings. Her three children were baptized and confirmed here. Her parents, Ron and Barbara Stephens, have donated various items over the years so her history is rich and embedded into Emanuel. Previously she was on the Council for six years and she looks forward to being part of the Endowment Committee.

**Marianne Wilcox** is a retired dental hygienist who has been a member of Emanuel since the 1950's! Marianne and her husband, Ray, raised two daughters in the church. She enjoys visiting homebound members, helping wherever needed, and is happy to serve on the Endowment Committee.

## NOMINATING

**Ed Gawlinski** grew up in Brooklyn, NY went to Catholic Elementary and High School and Saturday morning Polish language school. He has had a varied career programming computers and analyzing data. Ed moved to Connecticut in 1977, met Diane in 1978, and they married in 1979. When Marge Andersen and Duff Benson wanted to retire from 20 years of running the Saint Lucia festival, Ed's four year old daughter wanted to be in it so for the next 20+ years, Ed taught children and teenagers at Emanuel to sing seasonal songs in Swedish and do a few Swedish folk dances. While Ed's kids were growing up, they regularly went as a family to mass at St. James on Saturday afternoons and first service at Emanuel on Sunday mornings. Ed is very active with music at Emanuel. After about 40 years of regularly worshipping at Emanuel, Ed became a member in 2025.

**Kathy Rusch** (Please see bio under FINANCE).

## Calumet Ministries Committee

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In 2025, the congregation sent six of our youth to overnight Resident Camp and two to Calumet's Day Camp. We awarded \$3,856. in camperships, including registration fees.

The purpose of the committee is to coordinate Emanuel's support for, and member participation in the outdoor ministries offered by Calumet for youth and families. The committee is responsible for the following tasks.

- Making members generally aware of the ministries, programs, and opportunities offered by Calumet.
- Encouraging donations to and raising funds for the Reverend William White Calumet Fund. The fund is used to support members' participation in the summer, overnight Residential Camp, summer Day Camp, Leadership & Service program, and Counselor-in-Training program. Additionally, the fund may be used to support member participation at congregational retreats held at Calumet.
- Advertise the availability of financial support for summer youth programs at Calumet to the congregation.
- Solicit applications for financial assistance from members of the congregation and make campership awards annually.
- Coordinate communication of award amounts with applicants, the Calumet Registration Office, Pastor and Treasurer.
- Prepare an annual report of activity for the congregation.

Council appointed committee members include Donna Connolly, Garrett Connolly, Melissa Golden and Ray Purtell.

In the fall, a \$500 disbursement from the Endowment Fund was received for Calumet camperships. In November and December, the committee began soliciting campership applications for summer 2026. Awards are expected to be made in January/February 2026.

The committee also solicited donations for the Reverend William White Calumet Fund. In addition, a free will offering for camperships at the lunch preceding the January congregational meeting generated contributions to the fund. The lunch was funded, in part, with a Thrivent Action Team.

Looking ahead to 2026, the Committee plans to accept a free will offering at the annual meeting, encourage member contributions to the Rev. William White Calumet Fund, and apply for assistance from the Endowment Fund. In addition, a fellowship fundraiser will be held on February 8, 2026 featuring music led by "Music from the Heart". The lunch will feature a variety crock and stock pot delight, artisanal breads, and finger type desserts. A free will offering will be collected with 50% of the funds collected going to the Rev. William White Calumet Fund and 50% going to MACC.

The committee is appreciative of the support received from the congregation that facilitates this important ministry. As they sing at Calumet, "Boom Chicka Boom"! Thank you.



## *Worship and Arts Committee*

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The purpose of the Worship and Arts Committee is to review/discuss plans for the liturgical seasons throughout the year. The Worship and Arts Committee consists of Linda Jackson (Chairperson), Marge Andersen, Ed Gawlinski, Betsy Grupe, JaneMarie Galiette, and Kim Boerner-Mercier. The committee met four times this year. Below are highlights of the four meetings during 2025.

### January 7, 2025

- Discussed how the Advent and Christmas services went during December 2024.
- The Committee had decided to add “Art” to what we support and at the suggestion of Marge Andersen, Linda Jackson taught congregants how to make Scandinavian Stars during Coffee Hour. The project was well received.
- During Advent “Letters from God” were written by four congregants and read to the congregation during the Advent Wreath Candle Lighting.
- Attendance at Christmas Eve 11 AM service was 112 while at 4 PM it was 179.
- The committee then began discussion of plans for Lent, Holy Week and Easter.

### May 13, 2025

- During Lent, Holden Evening Prayer was presented on Thursday evening between New Day Singer and Anthem Choir rehearsals. It was attended by both Emanuel and Concordia parishioners.
- Weaving was selected as a Lenten art project with weaving done during coffee hour. Weaving was also done on a larger project during the Sunday service at communion.
- Easter attendance was 230 (maximum capacity of the Sanctuary is 250).
- Discussed the upcoming Handbell Boot Camp in June.

### August 25, 2025

- Discussed how the summer services went.
- Discussed the upcoming Fall season: Rally Day, Reformation Day, All Saints Day plans with the lighting of personalized candles for members who have passed during the year.

### November 4, 2025

- Discussed how Rally Day went and the wonderful response from the congregation to Eli’s request that we all wear costumes.
- Reformation Sunday and Noah Berneski’s Confirmation went well.
- All Saints Day provided an opportunity for all congregates to remember loved ones during candle lightings. Anne Heinrich created a list of Emanuel congregants who passed away during 2025.
- Creating felt birds ornaments was selected as the art project for Advent.

Submitted by Linda Jackson, Chairperson

## Endowment Committee

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The Endowment Committee is charged with overseeing the congregation's Endowment Fund which is invested with and managed by The ELCA Foundation. As of September 30, 2025, the fund balance totaled \$401,528.96. Fund balances by category were: Education (\$109,585.56); Extended Ministries (\$73,842.19); Structural Preservation (\$95,875.42); and Music (\$122,225.79). The total donations received through September 30, 2025, were \$3,769.43 and the total distributions for 2025 were \$8,950.00.

As a living, breathing source of funds for the work of the church, the Emanuel Endowment Fund has supported a variety of ministries. The Committee solicits proposals for fund disbursements from members of the congregation and makes recommendations to Council for the distributions. In 2025, monies were disbursed from each of the funds for the following uses: from the Structural Preservation Endowment Fund to help pay for the organ repairs; from the Music Endowment Fund to hire professional instrumentalists and soloists to enhance the music for the 2025 Christmas Eve and 2026 Easter services; from the Extended Ministries Endowment Fund to support Interval House to offset the loss of funding for services, the Reverend Bill White Campership Fund, and Lutheran World Relief to support global ministries; and from the Christian Education Endowment Fund to help Campfield Heinrich with housing expenses during his CPE training.

On behalf of the church, we thank you for your continued support. We also extend our appreciation to our Treasurer, Barton Sattler as well as our Office Administrator, Anne Heinrich.

Committee Members: Marianne Wilcox, Ben Hogue, Rosalynn Grzywinski, Adela Garmendia, Patrick Byrne, and Kim Boerner-Mercier.

Respectfully submitted,  
Patrick Byrne and Kim Boerner-Mercier, Co-Chairs

*Luther Friends* 

*Just as the heritage of Martin Luther has lived over the centuries in the hearts and lives of those who follow in his footsteps, the heritage of Emanuel Lutheran Church will live far into the future through its Endowment Funds.*



The focus of the effort is to take full advantage of the fraternal benefits provided by Thrivent through the Thrivent Choice and Thrivent Action Team programs. These programs provide funds for use by Emanuel to support and expand its ministry. The programs provide Thrivent members with an opportunity to direct a portion of Thrivent's charitable outreach funds.

Efforts focused on identifying Action Team projects to support and expand ministry as well as those that could reduce expenses that would otherwise be charged to the church's budget. A total of 19 Action Teams were approved; each receiving \$250 in seed money for a total of \$4,750! (This compares to the 18 projects and \$4,500 received in 2024.) Funded projects include: Lenten devotionals and weaving art, the confirmation retreat at Calumet, the new member brunch, mailing of quarterly statements, the Yard Goats game, the bells boot camp, Rally Day (2), printing stewardship materials, postage/ mailing stewardship materials (2), Stewardship coffee hour celebration, emergency food kits for MACC, stewardship thank you note mailing from Council, Advent devotionals, cookies & care packages for homebound members, Advent art projects, children's worship bags, and decorating the sanctuary for Christmas.

Special thanks to Anne Heinrich, Pastor Joanna (2), Brett Hertzog Betkoski, Helen Johnson (2), Sue Tracey, Bruce Tracey, Kathy Rusch, Gail McGrath (2), Marianne Wilcox (2), Ray Wilcox (2), Sarah Carlson, Lisa Little, Paxton Heinrich, and Ray Purtell (2) for submitting Action Team projects.

On February 23, we hosted Thrivent Sunday with a luncheon and educational seminar presented by Thrivent Engagement Coordinator, Kent Tedford. On March 30, an educational session, "Prepare Wisely: Estate Strategy Essentials" was presented with 22 members attending.

Thrivent members continue to designate charitable distributions to Emanuel through the Thrivent Choice program. To understand the potential financial impact of those donations, refer to the Special Funds Report (on page 24 of this annual report). On October 31, 2025 the Thrivent Distribution Fund had a balance of \$10,929. One hundred percent of those funds are used to support Emanuel's ministries.

We're always looking for additional projects and ministries to support. If you have an idea, please share it so that we can make it happen! Special thanks to all who have participated! **If you are a Thrivent member, please be sure to designate your Thrivent Choice dollars for 2025 by March 31, 2026 otherwise Thrivent will designate them for you. Doing it yourself allows you to direct the dollars to a charity of your choice!** Hopefully Emanuel can derive a significant benefit in support of its ministry.



Ray Purtell, Emanuel's Thrivent Coordinator

## *Friends of Music at Emanuel*

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The Friends of Music at Emanuel (FME) acknowledges with gratitude the continuing support of Emanuel Lutheran Church (ELC). FME is currently in its thirteenth season, which is testimony to the success of this partnership.

Each year, FME presents a series of chamber music concerts which overlap two calendar years (2024-2025), beginning in the fall and concluding in the spring. After each concert the board hosts a festive meet-and-greet reception, which is enjoyed by everyone.

### Concerts performed in calendar year 2025:

February 8 – Frisson Winds

March 22 – Anastasia Dedik

October 4 – Elqui Trio

November 9 – The Sebastians

December 14 – New England Chamber Choir (*NECC cancelled the concert because of snow.*)

FME is supported through contributions from donors and the solicitation of grants, keeping it totally independent from Emanuel's operating budget. The monies raised pay the artists' fees and administrative costs for publicity and the maintenance and tuning of instruments before concerts. FME does contribute to ELC for the use of the premises and its portion of Emanuel's liability insurance. Board members receive no compensation for their service.

FME's board of directors is deeply indebted to Emanuel for permitting the use of its premises and beautiful instruments for these free concerts and for the kind assistance of Anne Heinrich, Kathy Hatch, and Barton Sattler. Over the past twelve years, the series has introduced Emanuel with its outstanding acoustics and community spirit to Manchester and the surrounding area, and the community responds with a resounding affirmation that FME's concerts are valued.

FME is committed to continuing to bring superb musicians and singers to perform at Emanuel.

Respectfully submitted by the Board of Directors,

Robert Galloway (Program Director)

Susan Lionberger (President), Nick DuBaldo (Vice President), Ann Cook (Treasurer),

Marjorie Andersen (Secretary), Rod Andersen, John Cook and Sirkka Johnson



## ***Emanuel Housing Corporation***

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The Emanuel Housing Corporation (EHC) is a non-profit organization founded by members of Emanuel Lutheran Church in Manchester, with a clear and enduring mission: **to provide rental housing to elderly members of Emanuel and the elderly and needy of the surrounding communities.** As housing affordability continues to be one of the most pressing challenges facing Connecticut residents, this mission remains both urgent and deeply faithful.

Across the state, rising housing costs, limited rental availability, and fixed incomes place increasing strain on seniors and low-income households. In this context, Emanuel Housing Corporation remains committed to offering **well-maintained apartments at below-market rates**, providing stability, dignity, and peace of mind for our tenants. This work is a quiet but powerful expression of Emanuel’s care for the wider community.

During 2025, the Board of Directors, comprised primarily of Emanuel members, continued to steward the organization responsibly, supported by the dedicated work of Kathy Hatch (Property Manager) and Jim Willhoft (Bookkeeping). Together, they ensured that EHC remained financially stable while caring attentively for our properties and tenants.

Over the past year, the organization completed and advanced several important maintenance and improvement projects, including stair and deck replacements, window upgrades, fire and basement door improvements, power washing, interior apartment renovations, and ongoing repairs as needs arose. While often unseen, these efforts are essential to keeping our buildings safe, comfortable, and welcoming homes.

The Board also continued longer-term planning conversations about the future of Emanuel Housing Corporation which included the possibility of modest expansion, such as renovating an existing space to create an additional rental unit, so that we might one day serve **one more neighbor in need.**

We are grateful for those who have served faithfully on the Board in years past and for those who continue to give their time and gifts today. In 2025, the Board was led by:

Brett Hertzog Betkoski, President

Nils Loftus, Vice President

Rodney Andersen, Treasurer

Ray Purtell, Secretary

Erik Haaga, Doug Johnson, Mike Hatch, Board Members

As always, we are thankful for the continued partnership and trust of Emanuel Lutheran Church. Emanuel Housing Corporation exists because of this congregation’s vision, generosity, and belief that **providing stable housing is holy work—work that reflects Christ’s care for the vulnerable and the overlooked.**

With gratitude and hope,  
Brett Hertzog Betkoski  
President, Emanuel Housing Corporation



**Vision**

*Creative Living Community of Connecticut envisions adults in Connecticut with and without developmental disabilities as valued and contributing members of our society, exemplified in a model community to be created in eastern Connecticut where all members experience a sense of belonging, share resources and enjoy a happy life.*

**Mission**

*CLCC seeks to create a shared, inclusive living experience for individuals with and without developmental disabilities in a farm community, by focusing upon the gifts of all in mutually rewarding relationships.*

The farm community is the key element of the vision. People with and without a disability will interact by living together, working together and socializing together.

CLCC began as a mission team of the Emanuel Lutheran Church, Manchester, CT in 2007 through the leadership of Lynne Gustafson, Vyrjil Buus and Pastor David Halmers.

Today, the 501©3c public charity serves over 50 families annually from area towns including, Manchester, Coventry, Mansfield, Tolland, South Windsor, Vernon and other eastern Connecticut towns. Programs are offered at no cost at our farm, farmstand and greenhouse, in addition we provide paid employment and vocational training programs that create transferable job skills for adults with disabilities. One of the favorite positions for our vocational employees has been working in the CLCC Farmstand at the property in Coventry. This past summer, CLCC employed eleven neurodiverse adults for Farmstand hours at minimum wage! The Farmstand serves the Greater Coventry Community by providing fresh, local produce, CLCC microgreens and eggs, handcrafted gift items and many other products throughout the summer, fall and winter holiday season. The Farmstand was open an extra day this past season with the help of the Tuesday Volunteer Crew!

**2025 Accomplishments include:**

Coventry Property at 2645 Boston Tpke., Coventry: Ongoing upkeep to our property in Coventry is a big task for which includes: mowing of the property, maintaining our program for chickens and their egg production which are sold in the Farmstand and supporting the work on the renovation of the Property House.

Property House renovation began in June 2024 and is nearing completion in the early part of 2026! The Connecticut Department of Development Services is securing the program for three neurodiverse adults to be the first CLCC residents! Move in is scheduled for the Spring 2026.

Farmstand Operation: Provided paid employment and vocational training opportunities, at our farmstand as well as packing and distributing our Community Supported Agricultural (CSA) shares. The Tuesday Volunteer Crew allowed the Farmstand to be open an additional day last season.

CLCC Greenhouse in Vernon located at the Tolland Agricultural Center: Our greenhouse program continues growing microgreens for area restaurants while providing volunteer, paid employment and vocational training to six neurodiverse participants.

CLCC's Arts in the Afternoon and recreational programming provided artistic, social and recreational activities focused on inclusion, skill building and community involvement for adult participants with and without disabilities. The Art Program will be moving into the lower level of CLCC's renovated house this Spring.

Future Housing: Work moved forward with our plans to develop a "pocket neighborhood" of multi resident small houses on our property in Coventry, with the assistance of Construction Manager, Eric Bush, Peregrine Group and the Architectural firm, Union Studios. The master plan design includes renovation of the current house into a community room and a three bedroom apartment, as well as 1, 2 and 3 bedroom houses for up to 40 residents.



The picture on the left is the updated property house as of January 2025!

The picture in the middle is the Arts in the Afternoon Group at Wickham Park!

The third picture is the Farmstand Staff enjoying some fellowship at the end of the season last October!

CLCC is very grateful for the countless hours that our volunteers, Board of Directors and Staff provide to continue to move this mission forward.

I would like to invite—and challenge—you to become involved in the work of Creative Living Community of Connecticut (CLCC).

What began as a conversation in Luther Hall in 2006 has grown into an organization that is filling a vital social justice need in our local community and serving as a model across the state. CLCC was founded on the belief that adults with disabilities deserve not only safe housing, but true community, dignity, and opportunities to live meaningful lives.

Over the years, CLCC has moved from vision to action, creating inclusive living options and building partnerships that strengthen both residents and the broader community. None of this would have been possible without people who were willing to listen, care deeply, and step forward.

There are many ways members of Emanuel can support this mission—through volunteering, advocacy, sharing expertise, or financial support. Most importantly, your involvement helps ensure that our community remains a place where everyone is valued and belongs.

I hope you will take time to learn more about CLCC and consider how you might be part of this important work. Together, we can continue to live out our shared commitment to justice, compassion, and community.

Contact me or join us at any one of our fundraisers. Follow us on Facebook, Instagram and on our website:

[www.creativelc.org](http://www.creativelc.org) or email [info@creativelc.org](mailto:info@creativelc.org)

Steve Gustafson, President and Board Chair



Emanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church is a member of New England Synod of the  
**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**  
God's work. Our hands.

